

1934-1943

On January 7, 1926, the 69th Congress in the House of Representatives introduced a resolution to authorize the erection of a memorial to Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States (Prothero and Tepper, pp. 9-15). Eight years later on June 26, 1934, Congress passed a Joint Resolution establishing:

“The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, for the purpose of considering and formulating plans for designing and constructing a permanent memorial in the city of Washington, District of Columbia. Said Commission shall be composed of twelve commissioners as follows: Three persons to be appointed by the President of the United States, three Senators by the President of the Senate, three members of the House of Representatives, and three members of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Incorporated, to be selected by such foundation,” (73rd Congress Public Resolution - No. 49 H.J. Res 371).

The original bill went so far as to state the exact location of the memorial which was destined for the intersection of Constitution and Pennsylvania avenues, east of the front of the National Archives Building. In 1936, however, Congress granted the Memorial Commission complete power to decide upon the location of the memorial. The original site near the National Archives was deemed too small by President Roosevelt for such an important monument. Six other locations were subsequently considered by the commission, as described in a report by Gilmore Clarke and William Partridge, (April 9, 1937) consultants to the commission. The most favored of these involved the creation of an island for the memorial, in the middle of the Tidal Basin. Although this site was not ultimately chosen, it did establish the importance of having the memorial on axis with the White House and other cardinal points as designated in the L'Enfant Plan and as expressed in the McMillan Commission Plan of 1901. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. was himself a member of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission and wrote a report in 1935 to the commission about the choice of sites. Concerning the south axis site, he stressed the importance of the visual relationship with the other axial compositions, namely the east-west connection between the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol, and the north-south axis between the White House and the Washington Monument grounds.

John Russell Pope was the architect chosen by the commission in 1935. As an architect trained in the Beaux Arts tradition, his palette consisted primarily of classical style buildings. Pope had previously designed the National Archives building and Constitution Hall, both situated in Washington, D.C. He made several proposals for the Jefferson Memorial, including the scheme for the south axis site. His ambitious design constituted a formal treatment to the Tidal Basin and to the area north of it, calling for the construction of a large plaza-type island in the center of the basin. This proposal met with much criticism, highlighted in a report to the memorial commission by respected landscape architect Henry V. Hubbard. Hubbard stressed the proposal's inevitable high cost, the interference with the flushing activities of the basin, the loss of land and vegetation from East Potomac Park, and the over-bearing scale of the proposed development. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. also urged the commission to abandon this particular scheme in a telegram message of April 27, 1937.

“The Jefferson Memorial with its terraces as now designed would be so stupendous in appearance that in my opinion an adequate setting could probably never be created in the Tidal Basin location hemmed in by Bureau of Engraving and printing and by railroad and highway embankments and bridges. Other vitally important problems as yet unsolved and possibly insoluble are involved in its relations to surroundings including Washington and Lincoln Memorials. Unless and until successful solutions for these unsolved problems are found and embodied in feasible and approved plans for the reconstruction

of the surrounding park any precipitate commitment to building the latter as now designed would be a leap in the dark with failure more likely than success,” (Telegram to Harlean James, American Planning and Civic Association from Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., April 22, 1937).

By 1937, after consultation with both the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (Note name change: 1924-National Capital Park Commission, 1926-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1952-National Capital Planning Commission), the memorial commission adopted a resolution which modified the plan with regard to the proposed location of the memorial.

“It places the memorial on the south bank of the Tidal Basin, diminishing the expense of the memorial and its setting, preserving and improving the present traffic approach to the Highway Bridge. The site on the south bank of the Tidal Basin, on a line south through the White House, has been regarded ever since 1901 as the proper site for a memorial of major importance. In relation to the Washington Monument, it gives the Jefferson Memorial a position in the south similar to the position of the Lincoln Memorial on the west, and completes the great central plan of the city, in which the Capitol and the White House occupy the other two cardinal points on the east and north of the Monument. From the Washington Monument grounds the Jefferson Memorial will be seen across the Tidal Basin, which will retain its irregular outline and natural beauty and in which the memorial and the cherry trees flanking it will be mirrored,” (Report of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission to 75th Congress 3rd Session House of Representatives, Document No. 699, May 31st, 1938).

In order for the Thomas Jefferson Memorial to be exactly aligned on the north-south axis, with the White House and to be located on the water's edge, it was necessary to fill in a section of the southeasterly corner of the Tidal Basin and slightly realign the sea wall.

Inspired by Thomas Jefferson's architectural writings, and designs such as the University of Virginia and Monticello, Pope's design of the circular shape and low dome for the memorial also reflected the classical form of the Pantheon in Rome, but he added a circular Ionic peristyle and a portico to the basic circular structure. (Yonkers 1983, 20). In presenting his plans to the memorial commission in March of 1938, Pope explained that:

“Immediate consideration is given to the evidence of Jefferson's aesthetic leanings as shown in works executed under his direction and also in his writings and drawings. Two forms of the classic type of building seem to have met with his approbation. The great prototypes of these forms are probably best illustrated by the Pantheon in Rome and the Villa Rotunda near Vicenza.”

Reference to Jefferson was also made through the design of the entrances as clearly stated in the following architectural critique:

“The four entrances stand open to the colonnade, symbolizing Jefferson's ideals that ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ are the rights of all men,” (Yonkers 1983, 1).

Following Pope's death in 1937, his associates Otto R. Eggers and Daniel P. Higgins continued with the memorial work, despite protests that their appointment had been undemocratic and therefore "un-Jeffersonian" and a competition should have been held to choose Pope's successor.

On October 18, 1938, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. was officially appointed as landscape architect for the project. Thirty-seven years previously, while serving on the McMillan Commission, he had been

involved in designing and planning the Mall and the rest of the Capital as part of the McMillan Commission Plan. He continued almost throughout his life as a consultant on various projects constructed on the Mall. Much of the work on the Jefferson project, however, was carried out by Henry V. Hubbard, who worked for Olmsted's office. The general plan showing layout and massing of foliage from the Olmsted office is on plan No. N.P.S. 76-402, PPJ 716, Oct. 10, 1938, revised Nov. 1938.

In order for construction to begin on site, a number of cherry trees located near the edge of the Tidal Basin had to be removed. Such an act proved extremely controversial, as this area of West Potomac Park had become famous for its much loved trees. Several women's groups organized petitions against their removal, while others took more direct action and chained themselves to trees, preventing the work force from continuing. In an attempt to quiet the press and dispel rumors that 600 trees were going to be lost, the National Park Service advised the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission of the much smaller number of trees actually involved.

“Of the Cherry trees within the circle of 600 feet diameter, which will include the area occupied by the Memorial proper and surrounding roads, forty-six cherry trees are to be moved, and 35 cherry trees cut due to the change in shoreline of the Tidal Basin to conform to the Olmsted Landscape plan approved by the Fine Arts, Parks and Planning and Jefferson Memorial Commissions. In summation this will make a total of 88 cherry trees to be cut and 83 cherry trees to be moved when the entire landscape plan is carried out,” (paraphrased from a memorandum for the president, from Stuart G. Gibboney, acting Chairman; Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, November 15, 1938).

This information was passed on to President Roosevelt who, at a press conference, sought to appease widespread public opposition to the proposed location of the monument, allowing construction to proceed (Prothero and Tepper, 8-21). A ground-breaking ceremony took place on December 15, 1938 at 2:30 p.m. Prior to the ceremony, at the request of the President, all the trees were cleared from the area of construction.

The memorial commission's report of December 19, 1938 reveals that Olmsted's proposed general landscape plan was complete and awaiting approval. [This plan, although not actually specified as to its number, is presumably plan No. 716.] Olmsted and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission then negotiated a contract for the detailed plans for the area in Potomac Park from the Tidal Basin to the railroad embankment. This was signed in June 1939, following the issuing of the National Park Service topographical survey of the area to Olmsted. Cost estimates were prepared by the Olmsted Brothers for the realignment of the Sea Wall, new roads, walks and landscaping in West Potomac Park as depicted in his landscape plan, dated October 10, 1939 (Prothero and Tepper, 21-28).

In 1939, it was decided by the National Park Service that the landscape surrounding the memorial should be divided into five separate areas for the organization of the construction and planting. By this time 10,000 cubic yards of fill had been delivered to the site with the intention of filling in a portion of the Tidal Basin to the west of the memorial site to enable construction to progress. Piles continued to be driven down into the bedrock for the superstructure of the monument. It was reported that there were difficulties in driving the caissons vertically, due to the presence of rotten rock which was overlying the hard rock. As a result piles had to be added. (Thomas Jefferson Memorial report of April 1939.) This was later reported to have been a contributory cause of the structural failures which occurred after construction, leading to a 1965 engineers' study and subsequent stabilization works.

By February 7, 1941, Olmsted had completed both detailed planting plans [No. 758] “Planting Outside the Circular Roadway” and [No. 770], “Planting Inside Circular” Roadway, together with associated

planting lists, describing planting both the inside and outside of the circular drive surrounding the memorial. Both were criticized by all parties—the Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission—as being too complicated and too fussy, and for using too many different species for the scale of the project for which they were designed. Perhaps Olmsted’s intention behind including such diversity of plants was to draw attention to those species which would have been featured in a garden at Monticello and possibly to celebrate Jefferson’s skills as a botanist and plant collector. Yet Gilmore D. Clarke, Chairman for the Commission of Fine Arts, wrote of the design:

“ . . . the areas outside of the Memorial circular drive [plan No 758] contains, in the opinion of the writer, too many different varieties of plant material, which will result in a scheme too gardenesque, too detailed, and comprising plants too small in character to be in proper scale with the environs. The writer believes that all areas outside of the outer drive should be planted with trees and grass only, including major and minor trees, the latter being cherry trees in accordance with the express wishes of the President. Trees in this large scale composition would serve to create a more permanent treatment, and one in better scale with the memorial. Limiting the planting of these areas as in the manner suggested would appear to create a more quiet and more dignified planting composition, in character with the building and, quite incidentally, make for a much simpler problem of maintenance, an important consideration in a public park where great crowds gather,” (Letter to N. Drury, Director of the National Park Service, from Gilmore Clarke, Chairman, Commission of Fine Arts. March 4, 1941).

Clarke goes on to cite the road layout proposed to the south of the memorial as "inadequate, and in character inappropriate" suggesting further investigation is needed.

“In view of the contemplated changes with respect to the rearrangement of park drives, incident to the construction of the Fourteenth Street and Maine Avenue grade crossing separation structures, the Commission advises that further study be given to the problem of circulation in the vicinity of the Jefferson Memorial, outside of the circular drive, including the two diagonal roads connecting this drive with the present park road passing south of the memorial. The commission considers the proposed scheme inadequate and in character inappropriate. . . .The whole problem of parking automobiles in the vicinity of the Jefferson Memorial appears to require further study, and in this connection, the commission would be pleased to discuss this matter with your representatives at such time as may be appropriate in the circumstances,” (Letter to N. Drury, Director of the National Park Service, from Gilmore Clarke, Chairman, Commission of Fine Arts. March 4, 1941).

While the differences of opinion with regard to the planting plans continued, work progressed with the construction of the memorial structure. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Report for June 1941 states that the memorial project was 97.7% complete and listed activities concerning the landscape that had been carried out that month including, “The pouring of 4,500 sq. ft. of concrete pavement at the front of the memorial; the installing of tile lines for lawn drains between the terrace and stylobate walls; Earth filling and grading. . . ” (Report of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission for the month of June, 1941).

In response to the criticism, in August of 1941, the proposed layout of the lawn and road area to the south of the memorial was further changed by the Olmsted office as can be seen in plan 768. The converging roads, criticized previously by the Commission of Fine Arts through the words of Clarke as being "inappropriate," had been replaced by parallel roads. These were subsequently approved by Eggers and Higgins in their letter to Olmsted of August 1941. They did not, however, approve of Olmsted's new proposal to extend the line of trees east and west of the "approach roads," across the line of Route 1, towards the shore of the Potomac. Their opinion was that, in contrast to the Lincoln

Memorial, the setting of the Jefferson should be informal without long rows of trees. Furthermore, Eggers and Higgins advised:

“It is desirable to keep fairly narrow vistas of the Memorial in every case but the main one on the North” (Letter to F. L. Olmsted from Eggers and Higgins, New York, August 21, 1941).

Olmsted's reasoning behind his desire to have the lines of flanking trees was to link the southern axial space created by the trees, to the tree-flanked circular space surrounding the monument. He countered:

“The previous studies for such a rectangular treatment have made the space unpleasantly short in proportion to its width, a difficulty in large part overcome in the present plan by extending the flanking tree masses straight across the future dual highway and returning them across its southern axis (through which opening it would be possible in the remote future, if the obstruction of the railroad bridge is ever removed, to obtain from the memorial a long, narrow, axial view down the Potomac River),” (Letter to Mr. A.A. Demaray, Acting Director, National Park Service and Acting Executive Officer, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission from F. L. Olmsted, Jr., August 8, 1941).

Therefore Olmsted's proposal to make the grass area to the south rectangular, by the realignment of the approach roads, was dependant upon extending the space visually through the planting of long lines of trees across the physical barrier of the road. Though the extended tree lines never occurred the lines of trees adjacent to the outer edge of the roads were planted, together with the rectangular grass area created by the newly-approved parallel roads.

By October 1941, another planting plan concerning the area within the circular roadway was received from the Olmsted office and finally approved by the various commissions. This was a much simpler design than the previous gardenesque schemes, using only thirteen, mainly evergreen, species. This presumably satisfied the Commission of Fine Arts who had deemed the earlier plans "too fussy" and too difficult to maintain in a place where large crowds gather. The planting plan (No.181a) for the area outside the circular road differed from the previously rejected scheme in that Olmsted omitted the colorful shrubberies and restricted the planting to a limited choice of trees, shrubs and groundcover plants. This was apparently not a satisfactory solution, as far as he was concerned. In correspondence with the National Park Service, Olmsted wrote of the newly accepted planting plans:

“As to the use of shrubbery outside of the circular drive in view of the undoubted desirability of minimizing the amount of maintenance work required for keeping the surroundings of the memorial in first class condition, and in view of defensible differences in opinion as to the most desirable aesthetic effects, I have agreed with the Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts on the expediency of omitting from the planting outside of the circle all except the trees, provided that the soil is so prepared that shrubs may later be added if, as, and when it shall later appear that the trees alone (within the areas in the previous plans called for shrubbery also) are in fact insufficient to produce a satisfactory effect.”

Indeed, the simple use of evergreens around classical structures set in the landscape had been widely practiced in Europe since the eighteenth century, and probably seemed more appropriate in this setting, appealing to the Commission of Fine Arts' classical tastes. Conifers had also been widely used throughout history in memorial plantings and cemeteries (Plan No. 179 Sheets 1 & 2 and 181a).

Implementation of the landscape plans began once they were approved by all parties concerned. The New England Tree Expert Company was successful in securing the landscaping contract for the area within the circular roadway, submitting a bid \$10,000 less than the next lowest bid. The Olmsted office,

however, was not in agreement with the award of the contract as decried in a letter to the memorial commission from the National Park Service:

“A representative of this Office and also a representative of Olmsted's office have inspected the planting material bid on and our representative indicates that the material is well suited for the planting. The representative of Olmsted's office agrees with this viewpoint, but it is believed that he is not agreeable to the award of the contract to the low bidder, basing his opinion on his judgement with reference to what the work should cost” (Letter from F.F. Gillen, Superintendent, National Park Service, to Mr. Stuart G. Gibboney, Chairman, Jefferson Memorial Commission, November 12, 1941).

There is no apparent evidence of any maintenance schedules for the area, of the intended shapes or forms of the planting, with the exception of the drawing showing the planting at maturity. This illustration seems to include the more complicated shrub planting, as described in the rejected plans, (Drawing Nos. 758 & 770). Indeed it was dated June 30, 1941 - before Olmsted had submitted his final plans. The exact form of the plant material specified was drawn on a plan called Plant Specimen Types (National Park Service drawing of October 10, 1941, Drawing No. 65-52-179-2).

Once the area immediately surrounding the monument within the circular roadway was planted, it received criticism from the National Park Service, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, and Eggers and Higgins for appearing "too thin." It was subsequently bulked up with additional plant material before the official dedication. For example, originally the scheme had no pine trees adjacent to the building, but after the criticism from Eggers and Higgins with regard to the scarcity of the foliage, the plans were revised. The additional planting is indicated in Plan No. 65-52-178, “Additional Planting”, which shows the four groups of three additional white pines (*Pinus strobus*) and some minor rearrangement of the other shrub planting. Correspondence from Eggers and Higgins on this matter states:

“The planting gives one the impression of having been spread pretty thin over a large area. I know that funds for this part of the work were particularly limited but it disturbs me that even what we were able to buy is thin and scrawny and evidently not doing well. My particular case in point are the hollies at either side of the steps on the upper stylobate. I wanted a good heavy mass in this location. Instead the pines at the edge of the water tend to accentuate the thinness of the foliage of the groups of hollies . . .” (Letter to the Olmsted Brothers from Otto R. Eggers, Eggers and Higgins, July 14, 1942).

Yet Olmsted was reluctant to thicken up the planting, as described by the letter from the National Park Service of July 20, 1942:

“We agree with the criticism offered by Mr. Eggers in reference to the planting between the stylobate mall and the Memorial proper. We believe that the selection of this material was unfortunate for this location, and we have made several attempts to get Mr. Olmsted to agree to thicken it up in order to form a denser mass, but Mr. Olmsted was not agreeable,” (Letter to Stuart G. Gibbony of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission from F. F. Gillen, Sr. Asst. Superintendent of National Capital Parks - Central of the National Park Service; July 20 1942).

At this time Olmsted was suffering a period of ill health, and convalescing from an operation. He apologized for the fact that the planting was looking so thin. Subsequently he did agree to thicken up the planting, following consensus of opinion from all the other parties concerned that this was necessary. As well as the additional pines on the stylobate mall, some holly trees were replaced and added, and some rearrangement of the planting on the terrace was determined. Plan No. 65-52-178

shows the rearrangements. It is not clear whether the additional plant material requested by the architects was purely for making the memorial planting look "mature" for dedication or whether they anticipated the eventual impact of the large trees on the stylobate mall close to the building.

The contract for the planting work in the area outside the circular roadway was carried out by H. L. Frost and Higgins Co. The progress of planting work was described as follows in the Commission's report for May, 1942:

“Landscaping inside the circular roadway included the planting of 1800 small cotoneasters, and 30 yew and thorn trees on the lower terrace and roadway levels, [and] 2,600 small leafed Japanese hollies on the lower terrace inside the granite wall. . . . Landscaping outside the circular roadway, included the planting of dogwoods, thorns, crabapple and a sprinkling of maples, hollies, lindens and oaks, 47 large American elms, 11 planes. Periwinkle ground cover was planted in the two triangular spaces adjacent to the East and West ends of the Granite sea wall. Fine grading and seeding of vista strip on the West area of the monument and the panel to the south of the monument was done. . . . Planting of cherry trees by the National Park Service,” (Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, Monthly report for May, 1942).

Various circulation issues, in addition to those of vegetation, arose regarding the construction of the memorial. Drainage of the circular roadway was a primary concern. Olmsted was in favor of sloping the encircling roadway away from the monument, so there would only have to be catch basins on the outer edge of the circular roadway, but the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission had other ideas. Anticipating the settlement problems, they thought it preferable to play safe and shape the road asymmetrically in profile, incorporating drainage on both sides of the road. They would not, therefore, be subsequently faced with the drainage problem if the initially higher inner side of the road settled below the level of the drains on the outside. This was particularly important in the area on the Tidal Basin side of the memorial as this was all new fill material. Settlement has been an important consideration since the start of the memorial's construction. The construction of the roadways and sidewalks to facilitate "jacking up" is one indication of how this inevitable phenomenon was intended to be overcome. ["Jacking up" is a method of combating settlement problems by raising the level of the pavement or roadway, by injecting grout under pressure beneath it. It is limited in its application to raising in relatively small elevation increments. There must be lateral confinement underneath the surface to contain the semi-liquid material used in order for this operation to prove successful.] This concern about settlement was documented in a letter to the Olmsted office from the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission.

“Regarding the additional catch basins on the inside edge of the circular road and the asymmetrical crowning of this road as now proposed, it is the feeling of the National Park Service that this offers a more practical solution as we all are aware that the roadway pavement is bound to settle and as a matter of fact, is designed to anticipate jacking up when settlement would be sufficient to warrant re-jacking the roadway slabs. Additional catch basins will insure adequate drainage no matter which way the settlement occurs. If the roads were all drained to the outside, as originally suggested by your office, in case greater settlement occurred at the inside curb, no means would be available for draining. This was felt to be particularly important in the 40 foot section of the roadway on the basin side of the Memorial,” (Letter from Newton B. Drury, Director and Executive officer, T.J.M.C. to the Olmsted Brothers, August 21, 1941).

Treatment of the sidewalks, roads and curbs with respect to the choice of materials to be used was discussed between the National Park Service and Gilmore Clarke of the Commission of Fine Arts in August, 1941. The original intention was to use granite for the curbs of the encircling road, but because

they were \$10,000 more expensive than concrete, the latter was used instead. Similar budgetary restrictions were to apply to the approach walks both east and west of the memorial. It would have been cheaper to surface them in "straight concrete" but following complaints from the Commission of Fine Arts, it was agreed they would be surfaced in "black top" as they thought this was "less glaring and therefore more aesthetically pleasing." Parking was also a concern. For example, the road encircling the memorial is documented as being for "occasional use only," hence its width of only twenty-four feet, narrower than other roads to stop people from parking all around the edge (National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, meeting Sept. 29, 1938). In his letter dated August 8, 1941 Olmsted wrote:

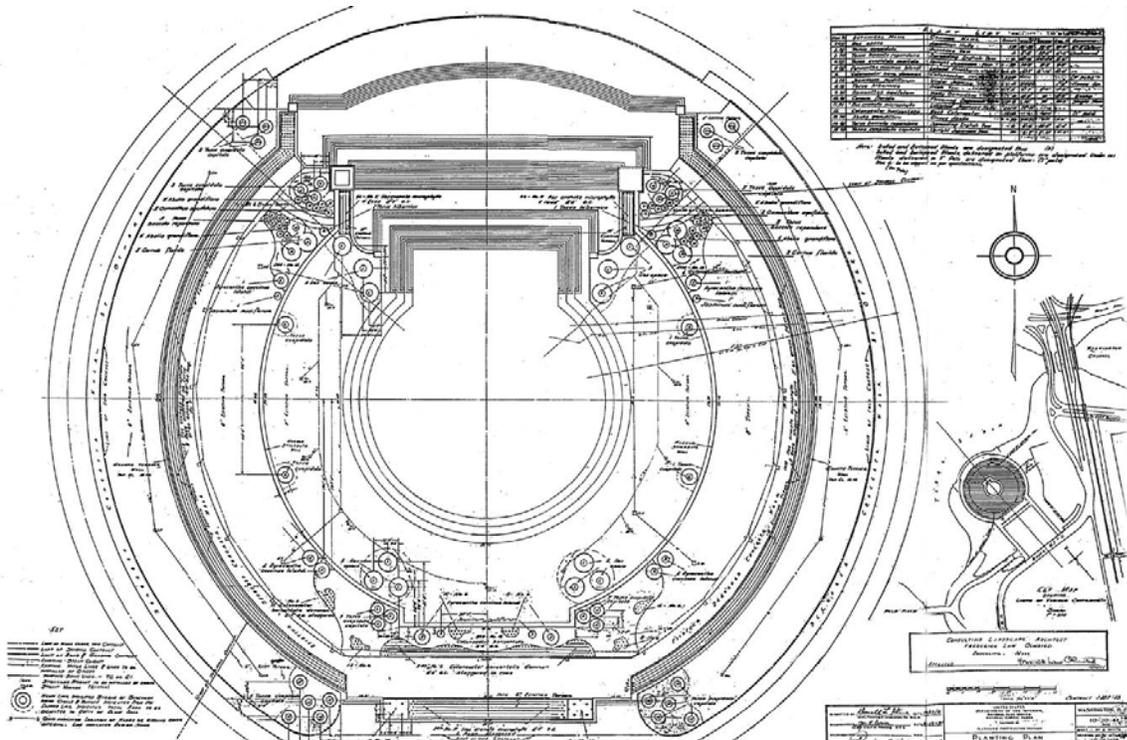
“ . . . attention is drawn to two other details on the blueprint (marked preliminary) of sheet 1 of the working drawings prepared in the Planning and Construction Division, which differ substantially from my grading study and which I failed to notice when I first examined the print last Saturday. One detail is the reduction in width of the approach roads from 27 to 24 feet. The width of 27 feet for these roads was adopted on my plan on the basis of a suggestion by Mr. Whitehead, agreed by Mr. Hubbard and others, that these roads should be wide enough to permit one row of parallel parking and two free lanes, whereas the circular road is deliberately made impracticable for any parking at any time,” (Letter from F. L. Olmsted to Mr. A. E. Demaray, N.P.S., August 8, 1941).

Although the circular road was designed to be impracticable for parking at any time, this proved to be an unsuccessful solution, and traffic control barriers were installed.

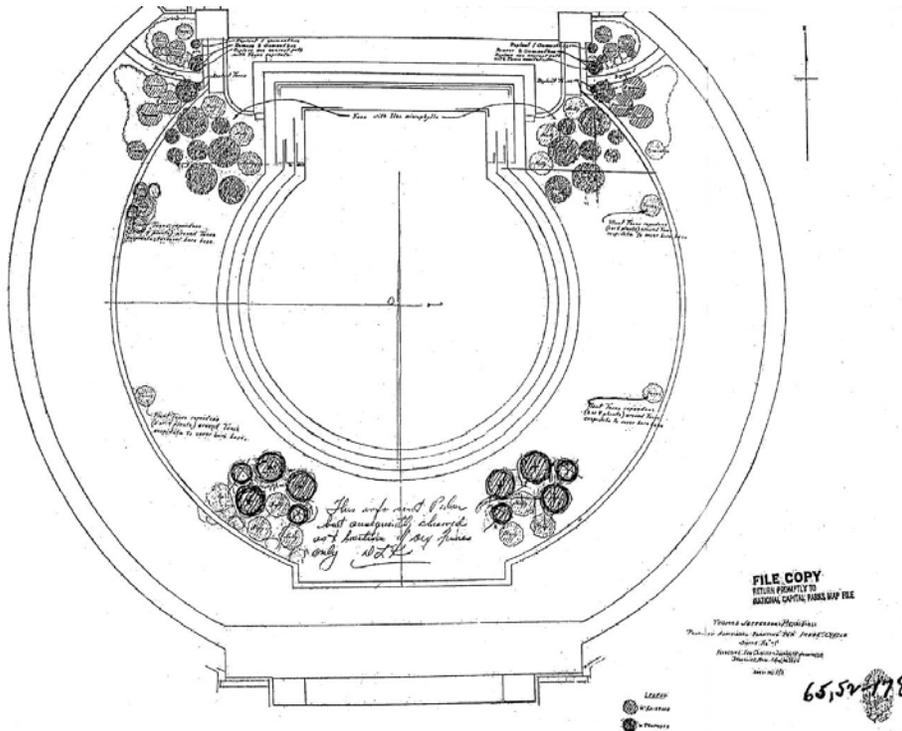
According to the Commission report of May 1942 the majority of the building and landscape work had been completed:

“The placing of asphalt surfacing on the concrete road base . . . the installing of drainage and water lines, and the placing and grading of topsoil on areas adjacent to the roadways Seawall construction by Potts and Callahan was completed,” (Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission report, May 1942).

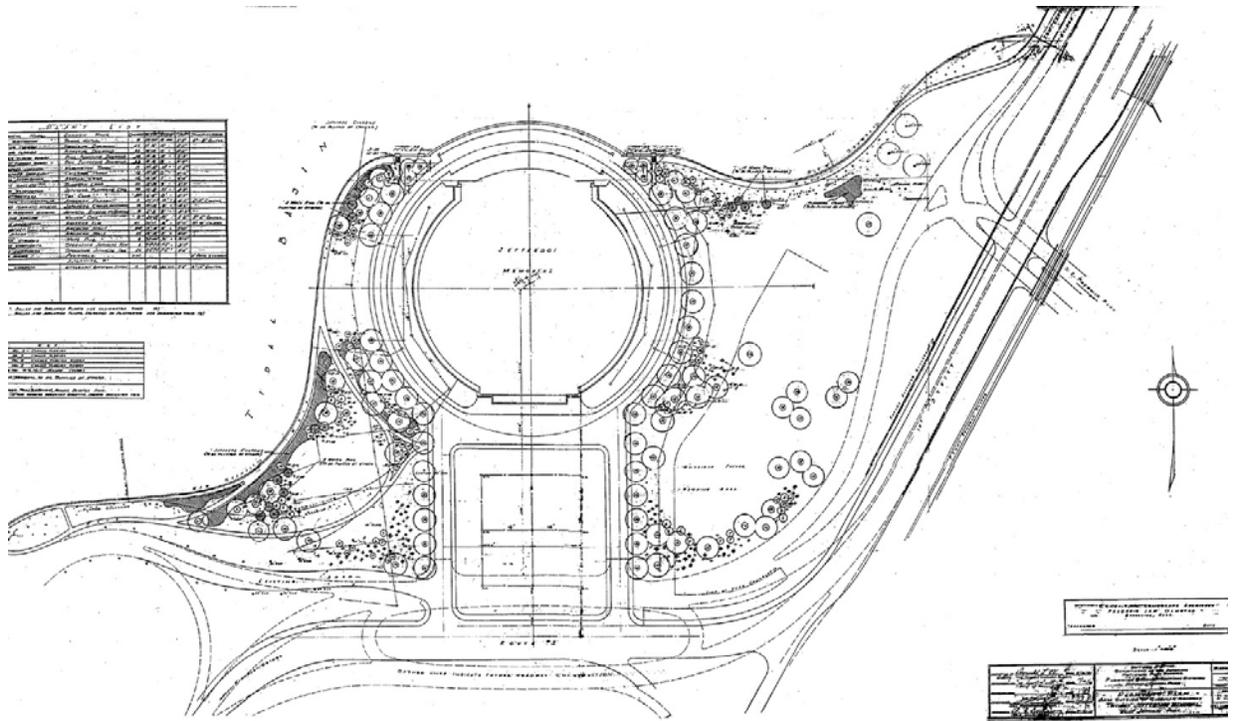
The sea wall, extending southwesterly to the Inlet Bridge, had to be realigned, both vertically and horizontally, by adding a course of stone and a six-inch, high concrete coping to bring it to its design elevation. Following this, the asphalt walkway was constructed alongside it, leading to the inlet and outlet bridges. It was completed in September, 1942. (Plan No. 754, 755, July 1940, Realignment of Seawall at Tidal Basin) The Jefferson Memorial was dedicated at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, April 13, 1943, on the 200th anniversary of Jefferson's birth (Prothero and Tepper, 15-46).



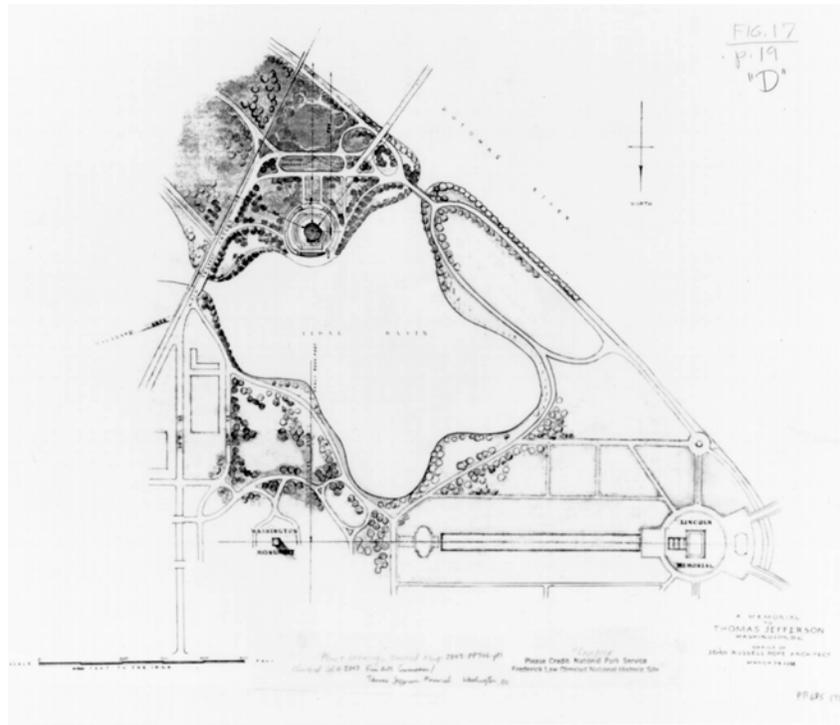
This Olmsted planting plan for the area of the memorial inside the circular drive shows the vegetation clustered within the drive and walks in the four corners of the stylobate mall, terrace mall and lower level.



This Olmsted sketch, 1941, shows the additional plantings agreed upon because the original planting was perceived as 'too thin'.



This 1941 Olmsted planting plan for outside the circular drive features small flowering trees with taller shade trees, all underplanted with grass.



Pope's site plan for the Jefferson Memorial, ca. 1938



Pope's perspective of the Jefferson Memorial, ca. 1938

1943-1998

In January of 1943 the vista between the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials was discussed by the Commission of Fine Arts, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, and Eggers and Higgins. By the end of the month this vista was opened up through pruning of trees, enabling the visitor a narrow view from one memorial to the other. It was intended that this should be further opened up to improve the vista. [This is described further in the "Views and Vistas" section of the Analysis and Evaluation section of this report.]

As was true during construction, settlement remained a major problem. Quickly, the National Park Service began a program of periodic surveys and inspections which continue today. [Details of these findings are documented in the Storch Engineers (New Jersey) report of 1965.] In addition, research suggests that the main marble steps were first reset by the National Park Service the same year of the Memorial's dedication—the first in a series of repairs and reconstructions that have continued up to the present day. By 1965, settlement of the adjacent roadway and side walks of up to three feet had occurred and led to the commissioning of the "Storch Report," by the National Park Service which, due to the complexity of the problem, took five years to complete.

The Storch Report identifies the following settlements, among many, as being significant in the relationship between the structure and the appearance of the landscape:

“. . . By 1951, settlement of the fill adjacent to the NW corner of the main approach steps had caused severe cracking of the sidewalk between the roadway and the main Memorial approach steps. . . Due to settlement of fill adjacent to the main steps and at the southerly approach to the terrace steps, wooden steps were placed on the settled ground . . . bituminous concrete was used to fill opened sidewalk joints. . . The maintenance department made use of mud-jacking techniques in attempts to raise portions of the

peripheral roadway, the adjacent sidewalk, the terrace walk and portions of the walk adjacent to the Tidal Basin,” (Storch Engineers, March 31, 1965, IV-8).

Various solutions to the problems briefly outlined above are described in the Storch report, sections VIII and IX, Recommendations For Rehabilitation. These recommendations preceded the most significant departure from Olmsted’s original landscape design intent in the landscape—the replacement of the roadway adjacent to the Tidal Basin with a plaza, and a replanting scheme around the memorial.

The memorial was closed in October 1969 in order to carry out the stabilization program which included installing concrete reinforcing struts to arrest the subsidence, the re-construction of sidewalks, re-building the terrace walk, and substantial planting and grading. The peripheral roadway at the Tidal Basin and some of the curbs and sidewalks were replaced, using a lightweight, expanded slag sub-base in place of the previous one, to reduce subsequent compaction. Previously, a heavy sub-base had been used which had compacted the underlying silty clay. Steps at the north side, which had been steadily shifting since their construction, were re-set back to their original position.

Most prominently visible in this package of renovations was the replacement of the roadway on the Tidal Basin side of the memorial with a multicolored exposed aggregate and colored concrete plaza. The sub-structure was modified to stabilize the memorial and the newly designed plaza to the north was 'floated' by means of a concrete slab. This slab was supported by a viaduct-like system of supporting and horizontal reinforced concrete beams. It was completed on December 16, 1970.

The levels of this area were considerably altered in that the new plaza adjacent to the seawall has a higher finished grade than its predecessor. This alteration in levels between the old existing road and the new plaza meant that the remaining approach roads to the new plaza, shown in the plan, had to be ramped upwards toward the plaza in order for them to meet. Obviously this higher level makes for better drainage of the plaza as the run-off falls in the direction of the Tidal Basin and to the catch basins at the east and west of the plaza in the road. The smooth curve of the circular road around the memorial, however, was lost.

The NPS plan number 65-52-243 shows the location of the trees and shrubs in November 1964. Significantly, the spreading yew (*Taxus baccata repandens*) located in the north-east quadrant of the stylobate mall, present in the original plans, is shown to be missing by 1964. The glossy abelia (*Abelia grandiflora*), previously located at the north of the terrace walk is also gone. To the south of the memorial the original cotoneasters (*Cotoneaster horizontalis* and *C. horizontalis dammeri*) have been removed, as have some of the winter flowering jasmines (*Jasminium nudiflorum*).

Grassed areas around the memorial, which had undergone settlement between the original design implementation and the Storch Report of 1964, were filled to meet the level of the peripheral roadway, bringing them back to their original design grade. Some of the Japanese hollies (*Ilex crenata microphylla*) along the terraced walk were replaced in kind after the beds were filled with a lightweight fill. Levels on the stylobate mall were also brought to grade with supplementary fill. Topsoil was distributed in the grassed areas and limited amounts of mulch were placed in the shrub beds. After completion of the majority of the work in September 1970, the memorial was re-opened to the public. (Grading Plan, North Plaza, N.P.S. dwg No. 808/40001, 26/58).

During the 1970s, two major landscape projects were carried out at the Jefferson Memorial—an additional planting and the installation of an automatic irrigation system. The addition of several yews (*Taxus cuspidata* 'Nana') on the stylobate mall and the planting of fourteen zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*) in

1972 by the National Park Service, added weight to the existing plantings. The planting design, although a departure from Olmsted's original scheme, still respected the original narrow vistas to the east and west. Over time, however, the yews grew to such an extent that they interfered with the openness of the original planting. The yews also hung over the edge of the stylobate wall which caused staining and deterioration of the marble. In 1986, three-thousand-eight-hundred and six dwarf inkberry (*Ilex glabra compacta*) plants, which made up the hedge on the terrace mall, were replaced with an equal number of the Japanese holly cultivar 'Shamrock.' Three original white pines (*Pinus strobus*) were removed around this time, and replaced with six foot high specimens.

An automatic irrigation system was installed in 1972 on the stylobate mall, in addition to the original "street washer" system which had been installed in 1941 that consisted of quick coupler valves for hose bib connections installed at grade in the stylobate and terrace mall area. Its purpose was to provide a source of water for hand irrigation by hose. The 1972 system was replaced in 1993. (See plan # 808/40002-A, 1/71, in the Einhorn Yaffee Prescott report, 'Jefferson Memorial Specific Tests and Evaluations of Stylobate Mall, 1992.') An irrigation system was installed in the grass rectangle to the south of the memorial in 1985. On-site investigation reveals that the system does not function effectively.

In 1993 the restoration of the stylobate mall, which consists of the grassed elevated terrace that rings the base of the memorial, returned the planting in this area back to the original "as-built" design, as the first stage of landscape restoration. Einhorn Yaffee Prescott (Architecture and Engineering) worked with their consultants, Stephenson and Good (Washington, D.C.), on a study of the stylobate mall planting. The work was executed in 1993, and included the addition of a replacement irrigation system, documented in the Einhorn Yaffee Prescott report of 1992 (Prothero and Tepper, 51-72).

In 1998 the lower level of the memorial was rehabilitated and an improved exhibit and staff space installed. The restrooms were enlarged to include a family restroom, and two shops were added. In an effort to restore the integrity of the historic landscape, plantings installed for the Bicentennial celebration, primarily hollies, have been removed. Dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and yew have been planted in keeping with the Olmsted plan.

A restoration of the entrance steps and plaza, completed in 2000, focused on rehabilitating the surfaces of the memorial landscape. All marble stairs were reset and repaired. The circular road was raised and resurfaced with aggregate concrete colored to mimic the original asphalt. The north plaza was redone with the same material, and raised so that it is completely flush. Where there were once curbs, granite pavers were set in the surface. The 1970s planters were removed and safety lighting was installed along the seawall. The walkways and parking lot were resurfaced, and minor landscape changes implemented, (Lorenzetti, 1,2001).



This aerial shows the site layout and includes the north plaza as reconstructed in 1970.



This circa 1950 aerial photograph shows young vegetation on the site, and the bridge approach immediately to the south of the grassy rectangle, as it existed at the time.